

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

ANTHONY MALDONADO,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. 17-C-96

LORI DOEHLING,
Health Service Manager,

Defendant.

SCREENING ORDER

The plaintiff, who is incarcerated at Redgranite Correctional Institution (RCI), filed a *pro se* complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that his civil rights were violated. This matter comes before the court on the plaintiff's petition to proceed *in forma pauperis*.

The plaintiff is required to pay the statutory filing fee of \$350.00 for this action. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). If a prisoner does not have the money to pay the filing fee, he or she can request leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*. The plaintiff has filed a certified copy of his prison trust account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the filing of his complaint, as required under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2). The plaintiff has been assessed and paid an initial partial filing fee of \$13.93 in this action.

The court is required to screen complaints brought by prisoners seeking relief against a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The court must dismiss a complaint or portion thereof if the prisoner has raised claims that are legally "frivolous or malicious," that fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or that seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b).

A claim is legally frivolous when it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989); *Hutchinson ex rel. Baker v. Spink*, 126 F.3d 895, 900 (7th Cir. 1997). The court may, therefore, dismiss a claim as frivolous where it is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory or where the factual contentions are clearly baseless. *Neitzke*, 490 U.S. at 327. “Malicious,” although sometimes treated as a synonym for “frivolous,” “is more usefully construed as intended to harass.” *Lindell v. McCallum*, 352 F.3d 1107, 1109-10 (7th Cir. 2003) (citations omitted).

To state a cognizable claim under the federal notice pleading system, the plaintiff is required to provide a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that he is entitled to relief[.]” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). It is not necessary for the plaintiff to plead specific facts and his statement need only “give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957)). However, a complaint that offers “labels and conclusions” or “formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). To state a claim, a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, “that is plausible on its face.” *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). The complaint allegations “must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (citation omitted).

To state a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege that: 1) he was deprived of a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States; and 2) the deprivation

was visited upon him by a person or persons acting under color of state law. *Buchanan-Moore v. County of Milwaukee*, 570 F.3d 824, 827 (7th Cir. 2009) (citing *Kramer v. Village of North Fond du Lac*, 384 F.3d 856, 861 (7th Cir. 2004)); see also *Gomez v. Toledo*, 446 U.S. 635, 640 (1980). The court is obliged to give the plaintiff's *pro se* allegations, "however inartfully pleaded," a liberal construction. See *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976)).

Maldonado alleges he suffers from severe back and feet pain. Specifically, he contends that he has "a marked congenital narrowing of the lumbar spinal canal related to short pedicles most pronounced from L3 downward." (ECF No. 1 at 3.) Maldonado claims that he has been denied surgery and other "significant action" since at least 2010. He allegedly has only been provided with limited pain medication. Maldonado also claims he has been repeatedly informed over the past several months that he would be seen by a doctor, although that meeting had not occurred as of January 16, 2017. He seeks injunctive relief in the form of immediate surgery as well as compensatory and punitive damages.

It is well-established that deliberate indifference to the serious medical needs of a person held in custody violates his or her constitutional rights. *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 104 (1976). To establish liability, a prisoner must show (1) that his medical need was objectively serious; and (2) that the official acted with deliberate indifference to the prisoner's health or safety. *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 834 (1994). A serious medical need is "one that has been diagnosed by a physician as mandating treatment or one that is so obvious that even a lay person would recognize the necessity for a doctor's attention." *Wynn v. Southward*, 251 F.3d 588, 593 (7th Cir. 2001). Deliberate indifference requires more than negligence; it requires that the official know of, yet

disregard, an excessive risk to the inmate's health or safety. *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 835, 837. Subjective knowledge of the risk is required: "[A]n official's failure to alleviate a significant risk that he should have perceived but did not, while no cause for commendation, cannot under our cases be condemned as the infliction of punishment." *Id.* at 838.

The complaint states the basics of an Eighth Amendment deliberate indifference claim and Maldonado may proceed on his claim for injunctive relief against Doebling in her official capacity as the Health Services manager at RCI. However, the complaint does not provide sufficient information for a claim of monetary damages against Doebling as an individual. "In addition to the element of deliberate indifference, § 1983 lawsuits against individuals require personal involvement in the alleged constitutional deprivation to support a viable claim." *Palmer v. Marion County*, 327 F.3d 588, 594 (7th Cir. 2003). As to supervisor defendants, "although direct participation is not necessary, there must at least be a showing that [they] acquiesced in some demonstrable way in the alleged constitutional violation." *Id.* The complaint does not claim to what extent, if at all, Doebling was involved in the alleged deprivation of Maldonado's medical treatment. Accordingly, Maldonado may not proceed on his claim for monetary damages against Doebling in her individual capacity.

ORDER

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* be and hereby is **GRANTED**.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that pursuant to an informal service agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Justice and this court, copies of plaintiff's complaint and this order are being electronically sent today to the Wisconsin Department of Justice for service on the state defendants.

IT IS ALSO ORDERED that, pursuant to the informal service agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Justice and this court, the defendants shall file a responsive pleading to the complaint within sixty days of receiving electronic notice of this order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections or his designee shall collect from the plaintiff's prison trust account the \$336.07 balance of the filing fee by collecting monthly payments from the plaintiff's prison trust account in an amount equal to 20% of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's trust account and forwarding payments to the clerk of the court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10 in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The payments shall be clearly identified by the case name and number assigned to this action.

IT IS ALSO ORDERED that copies of this order be sent to the warden of the institution where the inmate is confined.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the plaintiff shall submit all correspondence and legal material to:

Honorable William C. Griesbach
c/o Office of the Clerk
United States District Court - WIED
United States Courthouse
125 S. Jefferson St., Suite 102
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54301

PLEASE DO NOT MAIL ANYTHING DIRECTLY TO THE COURT'S CHAMBERS. It will only delay the processing of the matter.

The plaintiff is further advised that failure to make a timely submission may result in the dismissal of this action for failure to prosecute.

In addition, the parties must notify the Clerk of Court of any change of address. Failure to do so could result in orders or other information not being timely delivered, thus affecting the legal rights of the parties, and result in dismissal of the action.

Dated this 28th day of February, 2017.

s/ William C. Griesbach
William C. Griesbach, Chief Judge
United States District Court